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ABSTRACT

A study gathered information concerning the reading habits and attitudes of three groups of educators: 249 preservice teachers, 89 inservice teachers, and 65 teacher educators. A self-reported survey questionnaire was used to gather the data. When asked whether they enjoy reading, 89% of the preservice, 100% of the inservice, and 92% of the teacher educators responded positively. Results indicated that inservice and teacher educators spend more hours per week reading for pleasure than preservice teachers. Fiction was the overwhelming favorite across all groups, and children's books rated sixth overall and were read more by preservice teachers than by inservice or teacher educators. Adult non-fiction and magazines were the favorites in the non-fiction category. Textbooks and job-related materials were low priority reading across all groups, but especially for the preservice teachers. Inservice teachers reported reading journals more than teacher educators and preservice teachers. Inservice teachers were slightly more inclined to consider themselves to be avid readers than the other two groups. Results indicated that the reading habits of these educators seem to reflect a value of reading. The inservice teachers may need to be encouraged to read more professional journals, and the overall reporting of reading children's books was low across all groups. (Eight tables of data and the survey used are included.) (MG)

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READING HABITS OF INSERVICE AND PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

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Reading Habits of Inservice and Preservice Educators

For years, educators have recognized the significant influence that parents have on the reading habits of their children. Many researchers have concluded the importance of the role of the parents in instilling the desire to read in their children. It is also assumed that teachers' reading habits influence their students' reading. There are relatively few studies in the last 20 years that describe the reading habits of teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to look at the reading habits of preservice and inservice teachers to attempt to begin to fill that gap.

Duffey (1973) surveyed elementary teachers in 1966 and again in 1972 and found little change in their reading habits. He deplored the amount of non-reading that he found. Mueller (1973) surveyed graduate students who were teachers and found that they did not value either recreational or professional reading but when they read, they favored periodicals that offered practical ideas rather than theory or research.

Why should we teach children to read if it is to be a wasted ability? Educators agree that the ultimate goal of teaching reading is to produce readers who not only can, but will read for the rest of their lives. Teachers are being urged to instill a love of reading in students. One of the ways that teachers are being encouraged to do this is through the use of good literature in the reading program. Another is to provide time during the school day for students to read for pleasure. Do preservice and inservice teacher do what they urge children to do?

In a recent study related to adult reading habits, Zill and others (1988) found that a large proportion of adult recreational readers were women, college-educated, white, more affluent, and middle-aged. Underrepresented groups included men, those with less than a high school education, Blacks, Hispanics, those with low incomes, and the elderly. They also found that the bulk of material read consisted of popular fiction and that fewer than 25% of the people read quality literature and that only about 10% read the works of serious contemporary authors.

In a study of life-long readers, Matheny (1986) interviewed 60 avid readers to ascertain reasons they gave for their reading habits. She found that many mentioned that beginning reading and liking to read occurred first in the family, and that oral reading experiences in school were not particularly conducive to reading enjoyment. It

appeared that when the family had a strong positive influence for developing literacy, the school had relatively little effect on the students' reading attitudes. When the home had a negative impact on the student, the teacher and the school probably had the greatest opportunity to influence reading attitudes and habits. Gray (1982) studied the role of the elementary teacher in instilling a love of reading in children and found a need for teachers to provide materials of interest to children. She also stressed the pitfalls of oral reading in the classroom and the need for teachers to help parents plan appropriate book purchases.

Thompson (1984) found that active adult readers possess the same characteristics as those found among elementary age fluent readers. They enjoy information books, select difficult books for reading, read widely, and read more than their peers. Interestingly, when Stronks (1982) studied adult reading habits, she found that minimal and moderate readers indicated that they had been taught that **work** was far more important than reading and they expressed a deep concern that schools not only teach children how to read but also teach them to love reading.

Obviously the role of the home is important in the reading habits of children. What about the role of the teacher? What are the reading habits and practices of teachers? Radencich (1987) concluded that since children are so influenced by models, basal reader authors should include role models who read and write frequently, with pleasure and variety. She also concluded that it was exceedingly important for teachers to provide modeling and point out basal reader role models in instruction. Sledge (1986) advocates that young readers have their teachers as mentors in the reading process - someone who will recommend books and enjoy discussing the books with the children.

Morrow (1986) compared the attitudes of elementary school principals, teachers and parents toward promoting voluntary reading, with their attitudes toward instruction in comprehension, word recognition and study skills. The conclusion was that promotion of voluntary and recreational reading was considered the lowest in priority by all of these groups. The general attitude expressed by these groups was that children could read only after the more serious work had been completed. In another study Morrow (1985) found that students' voluntary reading could be increased through programs with many literacy activities, supported by well-designed classroom libraries. He also found that doing these things produced a positive attitude change for the teachers.

In light of the fact that the reading habits and attitudes of teachers is believed to be so important to the literacy level of

children, Searls (1985) surveyed 64 elementary teachers concerning their habits and attitudes toward reading and reading instruction and found much more positive results. She found that 95% read regularly for both information and pleasure. They seemed to value reading, thought themselves to be good readers, and wished they had more time to read. Of the K-2 teachers, 97% read to children but only 67% read every day and only 39% practiced sustained silent reading. Of the grade 3-6 teachers 82% read to children but only 44% read everyday, however, 55% had sustained silent reading at this level. Of all of the teachers surveyed, 61% said students see them reading materials not related to their duties, and, somewhat frighteningly, about a third of them thought reading could be taught effectively by teachers who do not love reading.

In a study of future elementary teachers, Gray (1986) found that of the 80 students surveyed, only 29 were reading a book at the time of the survey. Perhaps this is because undergraduates are reading textbooks rather than for pleasure.

The Sample

With all this in mind, we attempted to gather additional information concerning the reading habits and attitudes of three groups of educators: preservice teachers, inservice teachers and teacher educators. A self-reported survey questionnaire, which follows, was used to gather the data. The greatest response was from the preservice teachers since these surveys were given and collected by the faculty to their undergraduate classes. There was a 40% response rate from the insevice teachers and a 65% response rate from the teacher educators. There was a total of 403 responses, 249 from the preservice teachers, 89 from the inservice teachers, and 65 from teacher educators. Of the total population, 47% were under 25 years of age, 45% were between the ages of 25 and 50, and 9% were over 50 years old. Eighty-one percent were female, and 19% were male.

SURVEY OF PRE- AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATORS' READING HABITS

1. Are you taking classes? __Yes __No
   If no, skip to 3.
2. Do your classes require reading? __Yes __No
   _little _ some _a lot
3. Are you working? __Yes __No
   If no, skip to 5.
4. Does your job require reading? __Yes __No
   _little _ some _a lot
5. Do you read for pleasure? __Yes __No
   _little _ some _a lot
6. Please check the types of things that you read.
   ___newspapers
   ___magazines
   ___textbooks
   ___professional journals
   ___mail
   ___job related manuals
   ___adult fiction
   ___adult non-fiction
   ___religious materials, including the Bible
   ___children's books, read to children
   ___directions (for cooking/assembling, etc.)
   ___other (Please list other types of things that you read.)
   _____
7. Which of the above do you enjoy reading the most?

   _____
8. About how much time would you normally spend reading for pleasure in a week?____
   your job/classes in a week? _____
9. What is your favorite type of book? _____
10. What professional materials have you read recently?
    _____
11. What have you read for pleasure recently?
    _____
12. Do you hold a library card? __Yes __No
13. Do you use a library regularly? __Yes __No
14. Do you normally purchase books to be read for pleasure? __Yes __No

15. Do you borrow books from friends to be read for pleasure? __Yes __No
16. Do you browse in bookstores? __Yes __No
17. About how many books do you purchase to be given as gifts during a year? _____
18. Do you like to read? __Yes __No
19. Do you consider yourself an avid reader? __Yes __No
20. Do you encourage others to read? __Yes __No

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

Age	Sex	Education	Role
__under 25	__male	__H.S. grad	__undergrad student
__25 - 50	__female	__college grad	__grad student
__over 50		__post grad	__grad student/tchr
			__teacher:_elem
			__sec __professor

The Results

When asked if they enjoy reading, 89% percent of the preservice, 100% of the in service, and 92% of the teacher educators responded positively. Approximately 71% of all three groups reported that they borrow books for pleasure. The majority of all three groups stated that they enjoy browsing in bookstores. In keeping with Gray's (1986) study, Table 1 shows that inservice and teacher educators spend more hours per week reading for pleasure than preservice teachers.

Table 1
TIME READING FOR PLEASURE PER WEEK

	0 - 4 Hours	5-10 Hours	11+ Hours
Preservice	74.0	22.0	5.0
Inservice	42.0	49.0	9.0
Teacher Educator	43.0	48.0	10.0

Significance: .00000

Supporting Zill and others (1988), fiction was the overwhelming favorite across all groups as shown in Table 2. Children's books rated sixth overall, and were read more by preservice teachers than inservice or teacher educators. Adult non-fiction and magazines were the favorites in

the non-fiction category. Textbooks and job-related materials were low priority reading across all groups, but especially the preservice teachers.

Table 2
ENJOY READING THE MOST

Educator	Preservice	Inservice	Teacher
Adult Fiction	44.0	47.0	53.0
Magazines	32.0	34.0	41.0
Newspapers	18.0	33.0	38.0
Adult Non-fiction	16.0	24.0	24.0
Professional Journal	7.0	26.0	15.0
Children's Books	20.0	15.0	16.0
Mail	10.0	12.0	10.0
Religious/Bible	9.0	14.0	25.0
Textbooks	2.0	8.0	10.0
Directions	.3	8.0	13.0
Job-related Manuals	1.0	7.0	10.0

The largest percentage of the preservice and inservice teachers surveyed, spent between 5 and ten or more hours per week reading job related materials. Teacher educators were more likely to complete their weekly job related reading in 10 hours or less, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
TIME READING FOR JOB/CLASS/ PER WEEK

	0 - 4 Hours	5- 10 Hours	11+ Hours
Preservice	16.0	48.0	36.0
Inservice	15.0	53.0	32.0
Teacher Educator	39.0	36.0	25.0

Significance: .00173

Table 4 reveals that journals were favored significantly over textbooks as professional materials read recently. Surprisingly, inservice teachers reported reading journals more than teacher educators and preservice teachers.

Table 4
PROFESSIONAL MATERIAL READ RECENTLY

	Journals	Textbook	Other
Preservice	68.0	21.0	11.0
Inservice	83.0	12.0	5.0
Teacher Educator	70.0	15.0	15.0

Significance: .09558

Approximately the same percentage of inservice and teacher educators reported buying books for pleasure reading as shown in Table 5. Preservice teachers no doubt have less money than the other two groups which may be the reason fewer of them reported buying books for pleasure reading. They also are required to buy more textbooks than the other two groups, therefore less likely to spend money on books for pleasure. Preservice teachers also give fewer books as gifts per year as can be seen in Table 6.

Table 5
PURCHASE BOOKS FOR PLEASURE

	YES	NO
Preservice	42.0	58.0
Inservice	66.0	35.0
Teacher Educator	65.0	35.0

Significance: .00002

Table 6
NUMBER OF BOOKS BOUGHT AS GIFTS PER YEAR

	0-4	5-10	11+
Preservice	73.0	23.0	4.0
Inservice	48.0	38.0	14.
Teacher Educator	55.0	34.0	11.0

Significance: .00015

When asked if they considered themselves to be avid readers, the inservice teachers were slightly more inclined to answer yes than the other two groups as can be seen in Table 7. It is interesting that the teacher educators responded no more to this question than the other two groups. However, their expectations of an "avid" reader may have been more rigorous than the other groups.

Table 7
CONSIDER THEMSELVES AN AVID READER

	YES	NO
Preservice	63.0	37.0
Inservice	68.0	32.0
Teacher Educator	57.0	43.0

Significance: .36450

Table 8 reveals that nearly all of the inservice and teacher educators reported that they encourage others to read. Perhaps the preservice teachers felt that they did not have many opportunities to do so since they are not yet around children to a great extent.

Table 8
ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO READ

	YES	NO
Preservice	86.0	14.0
Inservice	97.0	3.0
Teacher Educator	98.0	2.0

Significance: .00075

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study were encouraging. The reading habits of these educators seem to reflect a value of reading. However, inservice teachers may need to be encouraged to read more professional journals, and the overall reporting of reading children's books was low across all groups. Just as parents need to be familiar with high quality children's literature to be read to and with children, so do teachers and teacher educators.

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